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U.S. Presses Israelis on Spy Case

Investigators Believe Pollard Involved in Extensive Operation

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The State Department has asked the Israeli government to respond to evidence uncovered by federal investigators that accused spy Jonathan Jay Pollard was part of a more extensive Israeli espionage operation than previously acknowledged, U.S. officials said yesterday.

Officials in recent days have provided an account of new details developed by the U.S. investigation of Pollard, a former civilian Navy counterintelligence analyst, to the government of Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres in Jerusalem, but no response has been received, sources said.

Officials familiar with the investigation said the latest information could renew the controversy over the sensitive issue of possible Israeli spying in the United States and further embarrass the Peres government.

Israeli officials had expressed hope that the Pollard case would be resolved without further straining U.S.-Israeli relations, which were shaken last year following the FBI's arrest of Pollard outside the Israeli Embassy here.

The investigation was broadened when Pollard decided to cooperate with authorities as his attorneys attempted to negotiate a plea in the case, the sources said. Pollard, who has been in custody without bond since his arrest Nov. 21, is facing a maximum sentence of life in prison. A decision on the charges against Pollard and his wife, Anne Henderson-Pollard, also arrested in the case, is expected soon, sources said.

In Israel yesterday, a senior Peres aide said the government "absolutely rejects" reports that Pollard's alleged activities were tied to an operation much wider than the Israelis had led the United States to believe.

The official noted a statement issued in December by the State Department, following the visit to Israel by a U.S. team probing the Pollard case, in which the State Department praised Israel for its "full cooperation." The official said Israel regarded the Pollard affair as having been "completely and fully clarified by the two governments."

However, U.S. officials said yesterday that the new information about Pollard's alleged activities emerged recently and was not known when the State Department made its statement.

U.S. sources said the new evidence indicates that other unidentified individuals here and in Israel, including an Israeli air force official, may have been tied to the espionage operation in which Pollard allegedly participated.

The sources also said another person may be charged in the case.

The Los Angeles Times has reported that the air force official is a regular visitor to the United States and is believed to have been the "master case officer" for U.S. intelligence operations.

One U.S. source said yesterday that Justice Department officials did not oppose the State Department's request to present the new information to the Israelis.

Sources said the information was recently conveyed to Israeli officials by State Department legal adviser Abraham Sofaer, who has been in the Middle East where negotiations on an Israeli-Egyptian border dispute have been conducted. Sofaer, who also headed the U.S. team that went to Israel on the Pollard case last year, made it clear that the United States wants a response, sources said.

Justice Department officials, who have pressed for disclosure of the full dimensions of the Pollard case, have been concerned that the State Department is trying to limit public testimony in court involving the new information, sources said.

A State Department official said yesterday that the department's only concern was that Israel be made aware of the information before it becomes public.

Spokesman Charles E. Redman said, "We have worked closely with the Department of Justice to ensure full enforcement of U.S. laws in this case, and we are continuing to do so."

Redman declined to reveal details of the investigation.

Correspondent William Claiborne, in Israel, contributed to this report.